

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



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San Francisco Public Library



ANNUAL REPORT 1995-96

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San Francisco Public Library

Government Information Center
San Francisco Public Library
100 Larkin Street, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

REFERENCE BOOK

Not to be taken from the Library

LEARN IN A NEW

unfolds
not in a

straight line



following a spiral

of shifting perspectives

—Herbert Muschamp

As the Library's original support group, it was fitting that the Friends launched a "Farewell Old Friend" campaign to mark the closure of the old Main. They distributed thousands of postcards which came back with fond memories and poignant poems.

Library staff and the public said goodbye to the old Main on New Year's Eve, 1995. Then, for three months, staff reorganized, labeled, mapped and moved a million books, approximately five million government documents, three million photographs, 150,000 bound periodicals and seven thousand videos. They also processed more than 63,000 new books, 3,500 new videos and 3,000 new CDs.

Left behind was a building constructed in 1917, which reached capacity in 1944. Much of the stack area had been off limits to the public for six years, due to earthquake damage. Former hallways and closets served as office space. The wiring reflected the electrical needs of the early 1900s.

A small group of community activists had begun to plan for the future by the early 1960s. But it took decades more and the participation of thousands before a new Main rose in Civic Center.

Those plans eventually grew into the largest public-private partnership in San Francisco history. Financed through \$104.5 million in bond funds and \$22 million in private donations, the new Main opened on April 18, 1996 with more than twice the space of the former building and five times the seating capacity.

Wired for the 21st century, this library has been equipped with almost 400 computer terminals serving patrons and

Farewell Old Friend

Public

I met my husband at the old Main in the fall of 1964. I was doing research on my M.A. thesis and he was a reference librarian. We met at the card file. He took me out for coffee. We were married the next year, and celebrated our 30th anniversary last year.



staff. Special software equipment in Deaf Services, the Library for the Blind and Print Handicapped, the Learning Differences Collection and throughout the building offer increased information and materials access for patrons with disabilities.

Larger than any individual branch, the Children's Center carries circulating materials in more than 50 languages. Multimedia terminals in the Electronic Discovery Center offer dozens of educational software programs. On the Lower Level, an auditorium, meeting rooms, gallery space and a café complement the building's function -

expanding its role as a community center and venue for unique programs and exhibitions.

Most importantly, the excitement generated by the opening of the new Main reminded San Franciscans of the wonderful resource they have in their own neighborhoods. Patrons relied on their branches while the old Main was closed. Circulation continued to increase from April to the end of the fiscal year in June at almost every one of the 26 branches that make up the San Francisco Public Library system.

Architects James Ingo Freed of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners (New York) and Cathy Simon of Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein Moris (San Francisco) have a word on Opening Day. Festivities were inaugurated by Mayor Willie Brown.

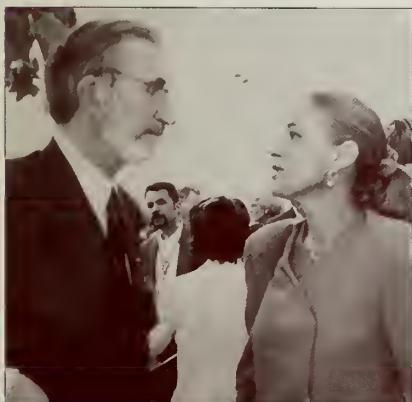


Such a nice pair of words.

Right up there with

cellar door, back porch, spring training and bread pudding."

— HERB CAEN





When the doors of the new Main Library opened to the tune of Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* on April 18, 1996, all of San Francisco indeed had cause for celebration.

After more than thirty years of tireless lobbying, fundraising, demonstrating and voting, the City had a cultural center that has become a source of pride to its patrons, an attraction for visitors and a symbol of the future for the library world.

In a recent survey, the San Francisco Public Library – the Main and 26 branches – was considered to be the City department most valued by residents for its staff service.

That vote of confidence reinforces our mission – to provide free and equal access to information, knowledge, independent learning and the joys of reading for our diverse community.

Toward that end, we introduced the Internet and other online databases in this landmark year, becoming the largest provider of free public access in California.

The Chinatown branch library, the most widely used branch in the system, moved back home to a renovated building that more than doubled in size. The Portola branch reopened in a new, larger site.

We launched a Literacy Van and an expedited reference service, Library Express. The Harvey Milk Archives and Scott Smith Collection were acquired. Almost 300,000 new books and other materials contributed to a 20% increase in circulation.

The new Main and expanded branches have attracted thousands of new card holders who can choose from more than two million books, millions of govern-

I Cannot

A NEW ERA

Digital technology is revolutionizing the way we communicate, store and retrieve information. So it is not surprising that the new Main, built to accommodate this technology, would become a focus of national debate on the changing nature of public libraries.

Some critics have urged the retention of the cabinet-bound card catalog in addition to the online catalog. Others have been concerned that technological resources might take precedence over books and other materials.

Everyone agrees, however, that the ability of the public library to help close the "information gap" between those with access to these resources and those without makes the institution essential to sustaining a democracy.

The public library, once a repository for the written word, is now, foremost, about access – to all forms of materials, in all kinds of places.

In just one month of operation, the Library's Internet address was accessed almost 64,000 times. Patrons unfamiliar

with digital resources may take our orientation classes. For preschoolers in public housing, we operate a Children's Bookmobile. For those homebound with AIDS, we provide a Friends for Life volunteer.

Enabling access can be as technical as an online civic conference between the Mayor and high school students, facilitated by library staff, or as simple as the ramps and wide spaces between shelves for wheelchairs.

Providing access also means acquiring the materials that enrich our common history as residents of the Bay Area, such as the Spanish diaries of Yerba Buena's early Mexican rulers, or the recent gift of an 1895 program of the Afro-American Congress of California.

It also means making archival material available. The San Francisco Digital Library now includes more than 3,000 digitized items from our photograph collection, as well as sheet music from the Dorothy Starr Music Collection. The images are now available on 11 multi-media workstations in the Main Library.



ment documents, thousands of video and audio tapes, CDs, periodicals, photos and several special collections, as well as up-to-date electronic resources.

Tens of thousands more have discovered the library through our increased number of programs, training sessions, exhibitions and use of meeting rooms.

Whether it be through the Children's Electronic Discovery Center, a citizenship test sampler in Chinese or Spanish, a novel, or simply the space where people meet to discuss the issues of the day, the San Francisco Public Library is an institution truly open to all possibilities.

Kenneth E. Donli

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San Francisco, CA 94102

REFERENCE BOOK

Not to be taken from the Library

*8,000 patrons
who visit the
Main daily.*

Without
BOOKS

Thomas Jefferson

Over **2** million reasons to live
— San Francisco Public Library



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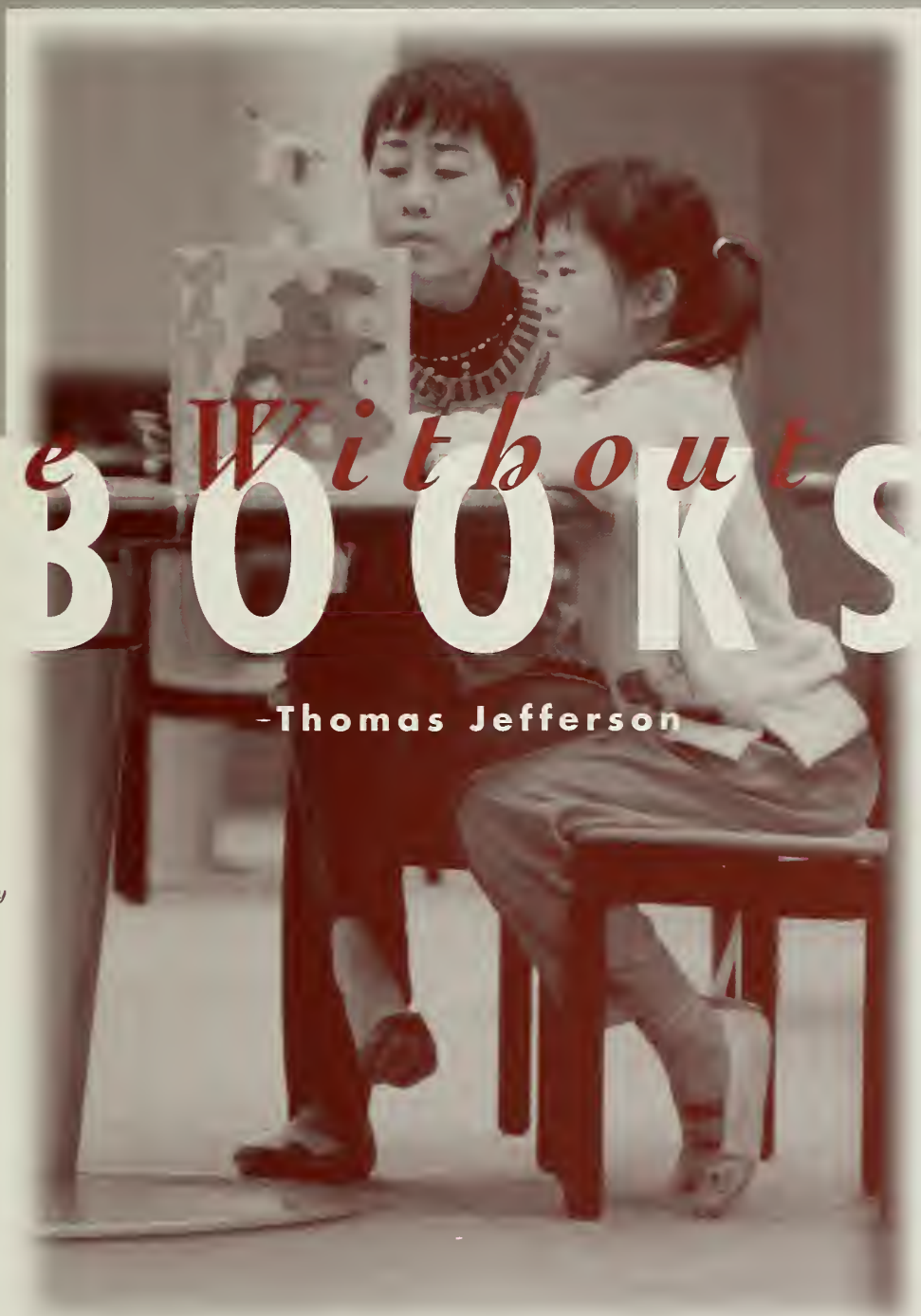


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Kenneth E. Donli



Live Without **BOOKS**

-Thomas Jefferson

*Pamela Yang
helps her mother
with English.
They are two of
the approximately
8,000 patrons
who visit the
Main daily.*

Over 2 million reasons to live
— San Francisco Public Library

The Library Foundation of San Francisco focused this year on raising the final \$3.75 million for the new Main – putting the campaign begun in 1988 over the top. More than 15,000 businesses, foundations and individuals contributed, including over 4,000 donors who worked to create diverse community "affinity groups." These groups added more than five million dollars to the ultimate total of \$36 million – funding which meant the difference between a bare bones facility and a state-of-the-art library in which the City could take pride.

In December, the Foundation held a "Goodbye to the old Main" evening as a kick-off toward raising funds for two free public events. Public Dedication Day celebrated the new Main in true San Francisco style. On April 18th, more than 14,000 visitors passed through the doors, after watching a parachutist drop from the sky to deliver the key to Mayor Willie Brown.

Three days later, the Foundation sponsored Family Day, co-chaired by Robin and Marsha Williams. Thousands of children brought parents to see the library, explore the Electronic Discovery Center, and enjoy readings by authors and other celebrities.

The Foundation also completed the campaign to remodel and expand the Chinatown branch. Private gifts of more than \$500,000 paid for furniture, fixtures, equipment and a roof garden. The branch's reopening in June was cause for a major neighborhood celebration funded by the Foundation.

As part of its expanded exhibitions program, the Foundation also sponsored the "Gateway to Gold Mountain" exhibit at the new Main, in association with the Angel Island Foundation. Photographs, essays and poetry portrayed the experience of thousands of Asian immigrants entering the United States via Angel Island, from 1910 to 1940. The Foundation also funded two other major exhibits.

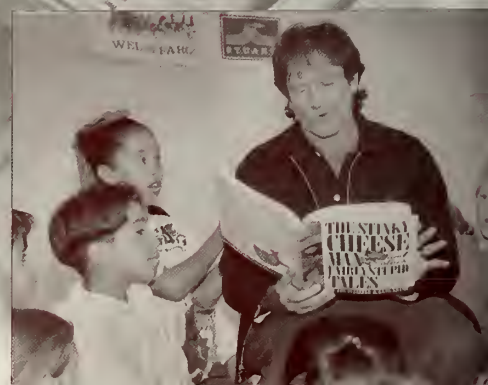
Next year, the Foundation plans to support expanded collections in the branches, as well as branch renovations. They will produce fundraising events to benefit the children's branch collections and special projects identified by the library, with new gifts totaling more than two million dollars. In addition, the Foundation manages the after-hours space rental program to generate much needed operating funds for the library.

Lion dancers help open the expanded Chinatown Branch Library.



Imagining the fabric

Leading library supporters join Robin Williams and young friends in celebrating Family Day.





Above left: Marjorie Stern checks out the first book, surrounded by fellow library activists Mary Louise Stong and Charlotte Swig, as well as Mayor Willie Brown.



Velina Brown and Peter Macon chat in a scene from the Langston Hughes story "The Blues I'm Playing," presented by the Word for Word

Theater Company. Support from the Friends made performance possible during Black History Month.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

It was no coincidence that Marjorie Stern, co-founder of Friends of the Library, checked out the first book on Opening Day – *A Free Library in this City*, by Peter Booth Wiley. Leading up to that simple act was more than 35 years of determined lobbying by Stern, along with Mary Louise Stong, Mig Mayer and a small group of activists for a new library that would befit the stature of San Francisco.

Three months later, almost a million books had been borrowed throughout the system. The Friends responded by initiating a new program – *Grants to Branches*. All 26 branch libraries, plus the Main, received grants to improve patron service. The Friends also provided funds to complete a skylight in the newspaper/periodical room of the newly renovated Chinatown branch.

members and community leaders.

A new business venture at the Main – the Friends' Library Store helped support these programs through proceeds from the sale of its unique books and literary gifts.

Their financial support enlivened the library's celebrations of the Children's Multicultural Arts Festival and Black History Month. Lion dance performances at 20 branches ushered in the Chinese New Year. Additional funds secured for the *Children's Summer Reading Program* increased the number of young participants by 27%. Almost a third more children than last year completed the program. Book Buddies, coordinated by the Friends, continued training volunteers to read to hospitalized children.

Other programs funded volunteer coordination, community outreach, continuing education for library staff, and special collections development. Generous book donations from the public allowed the Friends to contribute three dozen rare books to the Library's Special Collections.

Hundreds of dedicated Friends volunteers contributed thousands of hours – helping to raise money through work at the Book Bay Bookstore and book donation sorting room at Fort Mason, assisting patrons at the Welcome Desk in the Main Library, supporting the office staff, and serving as ambassadors to neighborhood branch libraries.

Ever ready to meet a challenge, the Friends will focus on improving the quality and service at neighborhood branches during the coming year.

During the year, the Friends administered more than half a million dollars in grants to the library. They funded nearly 300 programs and performances at all the branches and the Main – from dramatic performances and lectures for adults to storytelling and magic shows for children.

To publicize the programs, they continued to publish *At the Public Library*, a free monthly newsletter and calendar of library events distributed at all library branches and to more than 2000 Friends

of social life
t i o n ~ Simone Weil

| <i>Budget</i> | <i>1995-96</i> | <i>1994-95</i> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Expenditures | 36,283,346 | 29,749,053 |
| Revenues | | |
| <i>Children's Fund and</i> | | |
| <i>Library Preservation Fund</i> | 17,335,448 | \$13,075,124 |
| <i>General Fund</i> | 18,947,898 | \$16,673,929 |

Collection

(includes catalogued books, audio and video cassettes, phonodiscs and CDs)

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Total volumes | 2,124,162 | 2,000,000 |
| Periodical subscriptions | 11,603 | 8,177 |
| Government documents | 5,212,903 | 5,000,000 |
| Photographs | 3,000,000 | 3,000,000 |
| Materials added | 214,161 | 160,000 |

Activities

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Total questions | 3,005,931 | 2,656,130 |
| Library visits | 5,512,677 | 3,920,380 |
| Adult programs offered | 280 | 256 |
| Program attendance | 6,884 | 7,685 |

Circulation

(includes Interlibrary Loan)

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Total | 4,345,072 (100%) | 3,638,379 (100%) |
| Adult | 3,086,514 (71.03) | 2,672,639 (73.46) |
| Young Adult | 107,703 (2.48) | 55,463 (1.52) |
| Children | 1,150,855 (26.49) | 910,277 (25.02) |

Main Library

(closed January 1 - April 17, 1996)

| | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Number of open hours per week | 60 | 60 |
| Items circulated | 839,525 | 859,972 |
| Items used in the library | 624,675 | 982,200 |
| Questions answered | 1,318,509 | 1,427,575 |
| Number of people using library | 1,556,291 | 1,170,473 |
| Telephone access hours per week | 69 | 72 |

Branches

| | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Number of open hours per week | 1,112 | 1,112 |
| Items circulated | 3,498,879 | 2,769,924 |
| Items used in the branch libraries | 2,006,324 | 1,946,562 |
| Questions answered | 1,687,422 | 1,228,555 |
| Number of people using branch libraries | 3,956,386 | 2,749,907 |

Children and Youth

| | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| New books ordered | 67,000 | 67,000 |
| Program attendance | 196,481 | 158,570 |
| Participation in Summer Reading | 8,839 | 8,104 |



Photo Credits

Front and Back
Cover: "Functional
and Fantasy Stair"
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Little Girl
photo: Karen
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Page 3: Little Girl,
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Mayor Willie L.
Brown, Jr.
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Page 6: Kenneth
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Page 6: Young
Woman Reading
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Page 7: Mother
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"Constellation"
by Nayland Blake,
Main Library
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Chinatown Opening
Celebration
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Flores

Charlotte Swig,
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Page 9:
Marjorie Stern,
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Charlotte Swig,
Mayor Willie L.
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Actors from
"Word for Word"
Theater Company
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*Annual Report
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SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

ACCESS, DISCOVER, EMPOWER

